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A THEORY OF LIFE DEDUCED

FROM THE

EVOLUTION PHILOSOPHY.

BY

SYLVAN DREY.

OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;
20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH; AND
7, BROAD STREET, OXFORD.
1897.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

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BD 523
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Inscribed to my very dear young friends

SADIE ADLER AND ROSA STEIN

OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND,

IN THE
HOPE THAT THEIR KEEN INTEREST
IN THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THIS BROCHURE
MAY ENABLE THEM TO WHILE AWAY A PLEASANT HALF HOUR
IN THE PERUSAL OF
ITS PAGES.

BALTIMORE, MD., *December* 1*st*, 1897.

PREFATORY NOTE.

In presenting this *brochure* to the public the author desires to state that it was all but completed seven years ago substantially in the form in which it now appears. Various circumstances, chief among them the writer's ill-health, prevented the manuscript from being put into shape for publication at an earlier date.

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A THEORY OF LIFE DEDUCED FROM THE EVOLUTION PHILOSOPHY.

Beneath the abstractions and generalizations of every system of philosophy, worthy of the name, there lies concealed what may be termed *a theory* or *interpretation of life*, using the word "life" in its deepest and widest possible signification. True of philosophical systems in general, this is preëminently so of the Evolution Philosophy. Nay, more: assuming the real worth of any system of philosophy to be properly determinable by the rationality, the logical consistency, and the practical value of its theory of life, we can hardly question the superiority of the Evolution Philosophy over the metaphysical systems which it is destined to supplant. It is no part of our present purpose to advance arguments in support of these propositions except in so far as the exposition presently to be laid before the reader may be considered in this light.

No one at all familiar with the subject will need to be told that the central doctrines of the Evolution Philosophy, as herein set forth, are, to all intents and purposes, identical with the cardinal teachings of Herbert Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*. This close correspondence is easily accounted

for by the fact that there is no completely elaborated unification of knowledge, based on the doctrine of evolution and measuring up to the requirements of a system of philosophy, other than Herbert Spencer's. In other words the terms "Evolution Philosophy" and "Synthetic Philosophy" are practically convertible; and hence an expounder of the one is, of necessity, to a very great extent, the interpreter of the other, whether he is willing to acknowledge the fact or not. It is perhaps proper to add that though the conclusions set forth in the following pages cannot, in the nature of the case, be considered original, still the presentation of the subject and the method of treatment alike are, for the most part, so entirely our own as to make us alone responsible for any errors in the premises.

In attempting the task which we have undertaken, let us ask the reader to pause for a moment and picture to himself the globe on which he "moves, lives and has his being." Here, in the boundless regions of space—a tiny ball among the countless spheres that make up the universe—is an immense globe, adorned by the blended beauty of sea, mountain, valley, tree, field and flower, enlivened by the varied activity of a vast concourse of sentient beings, rolling ever on and on with ceaseless energy amid glittering myriads of other worlds that on a calm moonlight night look down upon man with a million of eyes. Standing in the presence of so profound a mystery, there is impressively forced upon us, as the starting point of any rational theory of life, the obvious elementary truth that man's very existence makes him a part of the great scheme of things; places him in some sort of relation to his own little planet and all that is on and around it; creates for him a terrestrial and an extra-terrestrial environment in which there is everywhere some-

thing of some kind that continuously obtrudes itself upon his consciousness. From which it follows that, if we are to construct a theory of life at all, our only available means and material for the purpose are, on the one hand, the human mind, and, on the other, our terrestrial and extra-terrestrial environment. The mind, however, being the court of last resort to which all questions that may arise in the course of our undertaking must be referred for final adjudication, it behoves us, at the very outset, to ascertain how far it is equipped for the task which it will have to perform. In other words, we must seek to acquaint ourselves both with the powers and the limitations of the human mind; for that it has its limitations no philosopher will at this late day dare to deny.

The mind, we say, is the faculty by which we know. But what is knowledge? What do we mean when we say we know some particular fact? Invariably it will be found to express an understanding of the quality of things, or of the attributes of persons, or of some relationship existing between persons or things, or both. It is impossible for us to know the first origin or real substance of anything, even of a common clod of earth. Every answer professing to explain either the first origin or the real substance of things is, in fact, only another question in a declarative form. A simple illustration will confirm the truth of this proposition. In answer to the question, What is the origin of the earth? the geologist tells us, "It was gradually formed from nebulous matter." But obviously this answer contains within itself the further query, Where did this nebulous matter come from? Sooner or later we stumble across these unanswerable queries in every branch of science. We perceive, then, at a glance, how narrow is the field of knowledge, how limited the powers of the

mind! We human beings can know nothing of the *primary how, what* or *why;* nothing of the first origin and real substance of things; nothing of mind or matter in themselves; we know only the *proximate how, what* and *why;* we know and can know only phenomena and their relations, and even such facts as are within the domain of knowledge are known to us as relative and not as absolute truth; they are true only for beings such as we. Why do we say so? For the simple reason that the limited capacities of a human being are always reflected in his perception of things—must of necessity determine the character of his knowledge. What we know presents itself to us as we know it because we are what we are. To beings otherwise constituted the known object would be otherwise known. Our analysis, then, brings us to this conclusion: whatever affects consciousness ranges itself either under the head of the unknowable or the knowable. And even such affections of consciousness as are knowable are known to us only as relative and not as absolute truth. Note carefully that the genesis and substance of things, according to our statement, are not only unknown but *absolutely unknowable.* As we are simply trying to set forth a theory of life, we do not regard it incumbent on us to fortify our propositions step by step with the necessary arguments; but there has been such a fatal misconception of the significance of the word unknowable, as used in this connection, that an extended elucidation seems absolutely essential.

"What right have you to say of anything that it is unknowable?" I imagine I hear some one object. "Unknowable, indeed! Who that recollects the glorious achievements of the human intellect will dare to pronounce as forever unknowable what is at present simply unknown? Might not the barbarians of thousands of years ago have

argued with equal force that no one could possibly master that of which *they* were then ignorant?" To the superficial reasoner this will seem to be a very formidable objection; but a little reflection will show the argument to be utterly fallacious. Note now the sophistry. Our imaginary opponent having appealed to history in support of his argument must of necessity grant us the same right—in fact, in a matter of this kind, where *a priori* reasoning fails to carry conviction, no other appeal is possible. Well, what are the facts? Judged from one point of view, science has made remarkable conquests in domains over which ignorance once reigned in undisputed supremacy; but, looked at from another aspect, with all our boasted attainments, it is a solemn truth that we stand to-day where the human race stood in its veriest infancy. Is there any philosopher living, or has he ever lived, who knows anything about the first cause or real substance of things in any proper sense of knowing? Can anybody to-day solve the mysteries of life and the universe? Has any genius of any age at any time done more than emphasize the fact that they are mysteries passing human comprehension? Unquestionably not; and if the human mind of the future is to have any fundamental points of resemblance to that of the present and the past, there can be no possibility of bringing within the domains of knowledge what is here designated as belonging to the sphere of the unknowable. Of course, as in the past so in the future, our fund of knowledge must grow with ever increasing rapidity. Progress—great progress there has been and ever will be; but it is, and of necessity must be, progress only along the line of the knowable. It cannot possibly be otherwise. To say that the mind which, by its very constitution, by the very nature of its knowing powers, can

understand things only phenomenally,—to say of the mind that it will ever be able to grasp things noumenally is somewhat akin to saying that the day will come when we can sing the visual impression of a painting or chisel the emotional stirrings of a song.* Those who have fallen into this error may find an easy way out of it, if they will but try to remember that what is to-day *unknown* may be either *knowable* or *unknowable.* The *knowable* includes so much of that which is at present unknown as it is possible for us to know in the future. How much that is, nobody will dare to predict; but it is at least certain that this part of the unknown (*i.e.,* so much as may be known in the future) embraces all potential knowledge concerning phenomena. The residue of the unknown is comprehended under the head of the *unknowable;* this part of the unknown includes things in their noumenal aspect. Hence what is at present unknown is divisible into the *knowable unknown* and the *unknowable unknown.* By the *knowable unknown* we mean potential knowledge of phenomena; by the *unknowable unknown* is meant what the mind by its very constitution is incapable of knowing; namely, things in their noumenal aspect. Or to express the idea in still another way, what is at present known may be either *phenomenally* or *noumenally* unknown; what is phenomenally unknown is always knowable, what is noumenally unknown is absolutely unknowable. To this argument there are but two conceivable objections. It might be said that the Supreme Being may some day so transfigure and illumine the human mind as to enable it to comprehend at a future day what is now totally beyond its powers of comprehension, and that by reason of this possible divine interposition we are logically estopped from

* I say advisedly *somewhat akin,* for the comparison is open to possible objections.

asserting that any part of the unknown is unknowable. To which, besides other answers, it is sufficient to say that even if the possibility of such an illumination be conceded, the concession does not disprove the proposition sought to be maintained; for in the case supposed we could not be said to know what is unknowable in any proper sense of knowing. The feat of having finally comprehended the incomprehensible would have been accomplished not by any resident forces of the human mind, not by any power of the intellect, but by some extra-mental agency. Or again, some ultra skeptic might say that we do not know anything at all, and hence cannot know that anything is unknowable. But the argument in support of absolute and universal ignorance defeats the very purpose for which it is here specifically made. For he who is endowed with such superlative stupidity is, on the one hand, estopped from denying that there may be an unknowable aspect of things, and, on the other hand, he cannot prove his own supreme ignorance so long as he is committed to the doctrine that nothing at all can be known. Moreover, the theory, if at all tenable, can be maintained only by arguments that are suicidal; for any evidence offered in its support would of itself disprove the proposition to be demonstrated. Its strongest proof, in a word, constitutes its strongest refutation.

Turning now from this long but necessary digression, let us see how far we have advanced in our undertaking. Almost at the very outset it became apparent that in attempting to construct a theory of life we can have no choice but to accept our mind, on the one hand, and our terrestrial and extra-terrestrial environment, on the other, as the only available implements and materials, so to speak, for the purpose. From the nature of the case, however, the mind must play the chief *rôle;* for it is the medium

through which we become cognizant of the external world. But the mind, as we saw, has its limitations as well as its powers. Whether considering problems of mind or of matter, we are forced to the conclusion that the genesis and substance of things are forever unknowable, that only phenomena and their relations are knowable, and that even such knowledge as it is possible for us to acquire is relative and not absolute truth; that is, we know what we know as we know it because we are what we are. To others differently constituted things are doubtless differently known. Now mark the important consequences that follow. What in the early part of this essay we distinguished as the terrestrial environment and the extra-terrestrial environment now appears to us each in two distinct forms, represented respectively by their unknowable and their knowable aspects. In other words, both the terrestrial environment and the extra-terrestrial environment have each an unknowable and a knowable side. The unknowable aspects of this dual environment reduced to their lowest terms stand for the impenetrable mystery in which the genesis and substance of things are shrouded; and although this mystery is beyond the possibility of a solution, it nevertheless persists in obtruding itself on consciousness—is just as much a part of the external influences that affect consciousness as is the knowable aspect of our environment. Hence when contemplating the grand scheme of the universe there are excited within us two sets of activities; one responding to the unknowable and mysterious aspect of our environment; the other to its knowable manifestations. Or to express ourselves from a point of view which it was the main object of the foregoing remarks to emphasize, we have now discovered a permanent basis for religion and for science. And here

it is worth while for the reader to note a fact already indicated by necessary implication; namely, that every rational theory of life considers man from an extra-terrestrial and a terrestrial point of view. For religion concerns itself with these two-fold relations in their unknowable aspect, while science deals with them in their knowable aspect. Having thus found a basis for religion and a basis for science, let us take up each separately, and see what is the significance of the division in its ultimate bearings.

Religion, as we have seen, has for its subject matter the mystery in which the universe is enshrouded. How, then, ought the word to be defined? Rightly understood, "Religion," to borrow words elsewhere used,* "may be defined as the consciousness that an inconceivable, an inexplicable energy is everywhere revealing itself in and through the workings of the entire universe." It consists in the recognition of this energy as an undefined, indefinable reality, from which in some way all things proceed, and to which all things are united. That it is a reality we are forced to conclude by all that we do know *a priori* and *a posteriori;* but the nature of the reality is utterly inscrutable. Man, however, is so constituted that he cannot avoid picturing it to himself in some way or other; and there can be no logical objection to any representation that ascribes to the ultimate cause no other attributes than the widest mental grasp makes absolutely essential. Any attempted definition of the Infinite, therefore, in full recognition of our total inability to do more than very dimly, very remotely apprehend its true nature—any conception that fully realizes how utterly unlike the reality is the symbol that would shadow forth its non-mechanical, non-

* Herbert Spencer's *Theory of Religion and Morality.* By Sylvan Drey. London: Williams and Norgate.

anthropomorphic character—is wholly unobjectionable, by very reason of the necessity under which we labour to express finitely what only the Infinite itself can adequately express. And now observe that it can constitute no valid objection to this idea of God that it fails to satisfy the needs of those who have been brought up to fashion the Infinite after man. Whoever cannot accept it is at perfect liberty to reject it; but let no one suppose that its value is to be tested by its capacity for satisfying the needs of those who have been taught to degrade God to the level of man. The point is not whether it can satisfy people who have been brought up with orthodox notions, but whether it cannot be made to satisfy the needs of a progressive humanity—whether, as society advances, the changes in our way of looking at things which always accompany social evolution will not make this view of God entirely acceptable; and to these questions no one who has his eyes open can fail to read the answers in the signs of the times.

God, thus conceived, though revealed to man through phenomena, is nevertheless unlike anything in the universe —though revealed to man through nature is unlike anything in nature. It is always this "Infinite and Eternal Energy" that manifests itself to us, whether the revelation comes through the calm stillness of a moonlight night, or through the tempestuous fury of a gale; whether it comes through sunny fields and meadows, or through the angry flames of a volcano. The relation in which we stand to this "Infinite and Eternal Energy" may, nay, must be relied on to call forth such emotions as are appropriate to the religious consciousness. If, as some critics assure us, the sentiments growing out of the Christian's present attitude toward the Deity will not be found among the religious emotions thus evoked, this is the best possible

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reason for believing that those sentiments are not appropriate to the higher forms of religion. Most people fall into the very pardonable error of living too intensely in the present. They seem to think that because a large majority of persons at the present day find it necessary to worship an anthropomorphic God, this will ever remain a necessity of human nature. No widespread belief has so completely obscured man's vision as the fallacy that human nature never changes. History proves most emphatically, not only that human nature does change, but that without such change social progress is impossible. Hence any objection to an idea of a first cause, based on a contrary supposition, need give us little concern. To know how to estimate such strictures at their true value, we have but to remember that, in the eyes of an idolator, the substitution of a mental picture of God for a wooden image might have been made an equally valid ground of complaint. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that this view of a first cause cannot gain a very wide acceptance until men are prepared for it. When that time arrives, a de-anthropomorphic conception of God will certainly find a fit response in the human soul. To attempt to forecast the emotional changes involved in such a remodelling of human nature would be a hazardous undertaking. But of one thing we may be certain. When the first cause ceases to be an object of love and worship as at present understood, those instincts which prompted men to love and worship God will find a much more appropriate sphere of activity. As for love, perhaps instead of persecuting our fellow-men out of zeal for God, we shall begin to practice the moral precepts which we have heretofore been content with simply preaching; and as for worship, perhaps such of our prevailing religious forms

and ceremonies as no longer harmonize with the new conception of God will make room for a genuine spirit of reverence for noble ideals of manhood and womanhood—ideals which we shall strive earnestly to realize in our own lives.

To recapitulate, the point to be emphasized is, that in place of the anthropomorphic notions of God now dominant, there is here offered a theistic attitude that acknowledges with unswerving consistency the complete inability of the human mind to grasp the Infinite. From this point of view, any representation of God that measures up to the highest theistic conception possible to human beings is wholly free from objection, when coupled with the frank admission that all such representations are at best but symbols totally unlike the incomprehensible reality for which they stand. This conception of God can, of course, gain general acceptance only so fast as the mass of men are alike intellectually, morally, and emotionally prepared for it; and with it will come all such changes in the externals of religion as its acceptance demands. "'Instead of the present religious ceremonies and forms of worship,' to borrow language elsewhere used, 'there will arise observances tending to keep alive a consciousness of the true relation in which we stand to the unknown cause, and tending to give expression to the sentiment accompanying that consciousness'; and as for the minister of the future, he will be chiefly a moral educator, but while discussing ethical questions, which must of themselves exert a highly elevating influence upon his hearers, he will, at the same time, have ample opportunity of ministering to their spiritual needs by appropriate references to the mysteries of cosmology, either for the purpose of quickening the religious emotions and reinforcing the religious consciousness, or

with a view of emphasizing some moral lesson which he may wish to bring home to the hearts of his auditors. Thus will man's conduct be influenced in the right direction. On the one hand, the necessity of leading a moral life will be impressed upon him; on the other hand, he will be led to reflect upon that inscrutable power whose marvellous energy reveals itself in a universe of wonders—a power which, though indefinable, nay, incomprehensible, is yet as real in its existence as it is unknowable in its attributes."*

Nor does this view of religion shut out all hopes of posthumous possibilites. Whether or not death means total annihilation is a question which no system of philosophy can even pretend to begin to answer; it is a part of the awful mystery that enshrouds the universe. There is no argument to deprive men of the right to hope for a life beyond the grave, provided always that the true nature of such a hope be constantly kept in mind, and provided they do not allow their feelings in the matter in any way to becloud their intellect. And there will be room for faith, too. Not the childish faith that trembles before logic, but the faith that can well afford to defy reason—faith that there is an everlasting meaning, a never-ending purpose in life and the universe, which our inability to grasp the entire scheme of things hides from us. Such a faith is, indeed, eminently rational. It does not shun investigation, nor seek to dull the edge of reason. On the contrary it rests on the logical deductions of a vision wide enough to recognize the deep significance of the limited powers of the human mind.

We come now to consider the subject-matter of science.

* Herbert Spencer's *Theory of Religion and Morality*. By Sylvan Drey. London: Williams and Norgate.

Religion, as we have seen, concerns itself solely with that which lies outside the domain of knowledge. It is only for the purpose of drawing the line of demarcation between the knowable and the unknowable, and pointing out the necessary inferences to be deduced from the distinction, that science can be said to touch on the subject-matter of religion. In other words, after proving that there is an unknowable as well as a knowable aspect of things, science surrenders to religion a vast territory over which it can claim no lawful dominion. In expressing ourselves thus, we give those gifted with more wit than insight an excellent opportunity of exercising their powers for the amusement of the unreasoning multitude. Despite all that has been said above on the subject, the field assigned to religion will doubtless be pictured as a barren, desolate waste, which science in a fit of altruism has graciously deeded over to its mighty opponent, for the sake of keeping peace in the evolutionist's kingdom. But when it is remembered that this "barren, desolate waste" stands in truth for the inexplicable origin and the unknowable substance of all things knowable and stands also for a boundless expanse of unexplorable space whose illimitable immensity eludes and baffles the human mind and makes our very imagination tremble; and when it is further remembered that this congeries of incomprehensible realities, through the all-powerful mystic influence which it must inevitably exert ever the souls of enlightened men, shows itself in every way adequate to the spiritual demands of highly civilized communities, criticism of the kind above indicated—to the thoughtful reader, at least,—will seem not more shallowly amusing than profoundly silly. Carefully bearing in mind, then, what it is the object of these preliminary remarks to bring into prominence,

that science makes no assumption of knowledge concerning those affections of consciousness which are comprehended under the unknowable, that it has no verdict to render regarding that which lies without the domain of knowledge, except to recognize the existence of such a sphere as belonging to religion and as capable of satisfying man's religious needs, it is strictly correct to say that science deals only with the knowable. Having told us, then, all that we can know about the subject-matter of religion, let us see what else science has to say about man in his terrestrial and extra-terrestrial relations. For this purpose it is not necessary to take up the various special branches of science. We need but glance cursorily over the whole field. We are concerned only with practical results. Let us see, then, what is the story that lies hidden in the deductions of science.

The earth on which we dwell is but an infinitesimal part of a vast universe that contains many other worlds besides our own. Of these other worlds nothing is known except such facts concerning their position, movements, and physical constitution as we have been able to gather by the aid of the telescope and the spectroscope. The entire universe, as at present existing, is supposed to have been gradually evolved from nebulous matter—the earth after being detached from the general mass still continuing to develop as a separate body, while remaining at the same time a part of the continuously evolving whole. So much for man in his extra-terrestrial relations,—what remains unconsidered belongs, as we have seen, to the domain of religion. But what of our past, present, and future, so far as life on this planet is concerned? For information of the past we are dependent on the records that have come down to us in the shape of history, monuments, and fossil

remains. From these sources we learn that the earth is many millions of years old, that two or three thousand centuries separate the man of to-day from his primitive ancestors, and that all life, vegetable, animal, and human, has been brought to its present state through a long-continued process of evolution. Furthermore, there is every reason to believe, from the evidence past and present, in the further working of these evolutionary forces to the end of bringing all things into higher and wider harmony. Ignoring now such aspects of the past, present, and future as do not directly concern the welfare of the human race,—for it would occupy too much space to attempt to exhaust the subject even in outline—let us inquire what is the meaning of social evolution. Pause for a moment and look back into the far past. Now glance around you to-day, and you will see that social evolution aims at establishing perfect peace between man and man, aims at uniting mankind in complete harmony. From a past state of chronic hostility on to the present predominantly peaceful state, to the ideal society of perfect peace—such is the unmistakable trend of social evolution. *Nolens volens* we are being impelled onward to this goal. There is a power over which each individual has but a limited control slowly making for the realization of all those possibilities that are bound up with a complete eradication of men's aggressive instincts.

What, now, is the practical import of this fact? What reasons are there for rejoicing over it? Why help along these social forces—why not use what power we have to resist them? Let us see. Given a globe, and given a number of people to populate that globe, there can be, broadly speaking, but three possible modes of associated life. Either the inhabitants must assume an attitude of

unqualified hostility towards one another, or of qualified hostility, or they must dwell together on terms of undisturbed peace. The earliest states of aggregate life may be characterized as preponderantly militant. To-day we have arrived at the predominantly peaceful stage and are moving on to the age of complete peace. Nor will social evolution have reached its final limit with the total disappearance of open aggression. Evidently the completely peaceful stage of corporate existence cannot claim to represent a perfectly evolved state until, in addition to the cessation of open hostility, there also prevails among men perfect justice and perfect beneficence. Or, to express the idea more properly, as taking into account the highest possible point of individual as well as corporate development, the perfectly evolved social state must be one in which human conduct has simultaneously reached its physical, biological, psychological, and sociological evolutionary limit. Let us say, then, for the sake of clearness, without meaning in any way to insist too strictly on our classification, that there are four states of associated life: the warlike, the predominantly peaceful, the completely peaceful, and the perfectly evolved, or what we shall hereafter call the ideal. Now arises the question, Which of these four states of corporate life is the best? But manifestly this problem admits of no solution until we agree on the meaning of the word "best." For if it be said that every one's ambition ought to be to perfect himself in the art of murder, then there is no good reason—save perhaps the difficulty of finding sufficient material on which to practise the art, in the presence of so many equally skilful brother-assassins—there is no good reason, we say, why the warlike state should not be pronounced the best. But clearly no such meaning is implied by the term

as used by civilized men. When we ask the question: "Which is the best?" we make the tacit assumption, universally concurred in among ourselves, that we all want to extract as much happiness out of life as is possible. All men agree, then, that the greatest attainable happiness is the *ultimate* aim of life. I say designedly "ultimate" aim; because there are those who deny that they make happiness the final object of pursuit, and think that they are acting in perfect consonance with the denial in choosing such ends as perfection, virtue, and so forth. Invariably, however, analysis shows that they choose some other proximate aim, simply because happiness is unconsciously made the ultimate end. Restated, then, the problem assumes this form: Which of the four kinds of aggregate life is productive of the greatest possible happiness? I say designedly "the greatest possible happiness." Not perfect happiness; for observe that happiness is not solely dependent upon human conduct. Even in a state composed of ideal men there may be causes of unhappiness, due to the destructive forces in nature. Over these mankind may never gain complete control. The elements can do a great deal towards destroying happiness, and, so long as we do not see our way clear to say of the destructive forces in nature that they will ultimately behave towards mankind like perfectly ethical men, we cannot consistently argue on a contrary hypothesis. Bearing, then, this qualification in mind, let us try briefly to determine which of the four enumerated states of corporate life must be productive of the greatest happiness. But now a new difficulty confronts us. How is it possible amid so much diversity of opinion to agree upon any common standard of happiness? A, let us say, takes delight in music; B's hobby is hunting; while C is passionately fond of the drama, and so on; who shall

judge, then, of what happiness consists? The difficulty here presented is more apparent than real. There is no necessity of trying to arrive at any consensus as to what constitutes happiness. We must determine not the *contents* of happiness, but *the conditions to its attainment.* What, then, are these conditions? Clearly, that each one of us shall be perfectly free to do what he wills, and yet at the same time be so constituted as not to want to do anything that interferes with the full development of himself and of others. It must be our voluntary desire to further the life of ourselves and our fellow-man in every imaginable way, and we must have reciprocally limited spheres of activity to enable us to gratify this desire.

We are now at last in a position to answer the queries first above propounded. It needs no argument to prove that the only form of associated life that conforms to the conditions necessary to the attainment of the greatest human happiness is that which we designated above as the ideal state. Hence we can clearly perceive why we ought to help along the forces of social evolution, why we ought to believe in true civilization; for what does it all mean but a closer approximation to that state of existence in which the conditions to the attainment of the greatest possible happiness are supposed to have been fulfilled?

The ideal society is but the logical outcome of all this striving after the greatest attainable happiness; for being composed of men who are perfectly peaceful, perfectly just, and perfectly beneficent; of men whose conduct has simultaneously reached its physical, biological, psychological, and sociological evolutionary limit, it must *ex necessitate* present a state of affairs where human beings, by conforming to all the requirements of their surroundings, shall find the greatest possible happiness in so doing, and thus realize

as well as may be what is universally conceded to be the ultimate object of life. And even though we may not positively assert that the ideal state will ever be attained, it is nevertheless possible of attainment; and "unless the whole evolutionary theory be a farce," to borrow words elsewhere used, "antagonism between men must eventually disappear, and in obedience to the law of increasing adaptability of means to ends, social harmony, to a very high degree, must reign in its stead."

And now we are in sight of a very important truth, which it was the ulterior purpose of the foregoing remarks to bring out into greater clearness. Judged from another point of view, the source whence the ideal society derives its sanction furnishes us with a scientific basis for ethics and politics; for, if there be a social arrangement possible by which the greatest sum of happiness can be attained,—small as may be the chance of its actual realization,—it follows as the day the night that in the conditions for the maintenance of such a state is to be found our material for constructing a moral and political science. Our next step, then, must be briefly to formulate the teachings of these sciences as thus derived. And first, as to ethics—what are its fundamental principles? Translated into simple language they may be thus stated: You say that the aim of life is the greatest possible happiness. Granted. Recollect, however, that you are but one of many millions of people, and what has been admitted in your case applies with equal truth to every other human being. You say that if the greatest happiness is the object of existence, you have a right to strive to attain that end. So you have. Bear in mind, however, that this is a right which every other human being enjoys in common with yourself. Hence arises the necessity of limiting your freedom of action to

the extent of recognizing the right of your fellow-men to strive after happiness as well as yourself; otherwise everybody will rush pell-mell, and, amid the hopeless conflict of the general scramble after happiness, there will result no little misery. You cannot possibly offer any logical objection to such a limitation being placed on your conduct; for remember it is but another way of saying that nobody ought to interfere unduly with your right to strive after happiness. Furthermore, do not forget that happiness varies in degrees of intensity. Do not suppose that the character of your tastes has no effect on your happiness. Recollect that the more you cultivate all your faculties, the greater is the sum and the higher is the degree of the happiness which results from their exercise. You see, then, that if you want to secure the greatest possible happiness, there are certain conditions to which you must conform, in order that you may accomplish your end. Not only must you do all in your power to perfect your own development, not only must you be absolutely just in all your dealings with your fellow-men, not only must you do nothing to give them pain, but you must actively do everything in your power to assist them in gratifying all those desires which would help to perfect their own development. In other words, as the perfect fulfilment of the moral law constitutes the only means by which the greatest attainable happiness can be achieved, *strict obedience to the moral law, and not the pursuit of happiness*, must be made the immediate object of life. But, if morality is conducive to happiness, how does it come about that the good are so often unhappy, and the wicked happy? The explanation is very simple. The unhappiness of the good man springs not from his own morality, but from the wickedness of somebody else. An illustration will help to correct this

fatal misconception. A baker, a butcher, a grocer, a clothier, a milkman, a hatter, and a physician make up the entire population of a certain town. They are all good, honest citizens, let us assume, except the baker and the milkman, who are fairly dealt by in their transactions with the rest of the community in spite of their own unscrupulous practices and their successful attempts to evade their debts. Now, of course, under such circumstances an honest man, the butcher for example, in the case supposed, may easily be made very unhappy; but to assign his honesty as the efficient cause of his unhappiness would be about as logical as to say that the injury which a careful person might sustain by falling on the sleety pavement of a negligent neighbour was caused by the injured man's prudence in removing the ice from his own premises.* No, morality is never the direct cause of unhappiness. The objection here raised only proves what has already by necessary implication been strongly emphasized, namely, that universal happiness is dependent on universal morality. If in an ideal society, which, as we have seen, means a condition of things where the greatest attainable happiness prevails, any one of the units should suddenly lapse from a state of moral perfection, the total sum of happiness would instantly be diminished, and the society would of necessity cease *pro tanto* to represent the ideal state. Judge, then, what must be the effect in a society such as ours, where momentarily thousands upon thousands are committing trespasses against their fellow-men! Amid such a hopelessly confused entanglement of the natural results of

* Such subjective states of happiness as result from the fulfilment of one's duty and which ought to be taken into account as an offset against unhappiness objectively caused, I purposely ignore here, in order to present my opponent's side of the case in its strongest light.

moral and immoral conduct as the associated life of millions of good, bad, and indifferent human beings presents, is it a wonder that the true causal connection between morality and happiness should be somewhat obscured? Not in the least. Let us be careful then not to confound superficial observation with profound criticism. We must not mistake outer signs for inner realities—hold fast the shadow of things and let go the substance. Despite all that can be said to the contrary, the man who makes the greatest attainable happiness the object of his existence is consistently bound to lead as moral a life as his surroundings permit; for even if his lot happens to be cast among men who fail in their duty to him, by imitating their example he does but increase the sum of misery, which must in some way, however subtle, recoil upon himself.

And just here a word of caution seems necessary to correct a grave misapprehension. In setting forth the above facts I do not mean to imply that the evolution philosophy relies upon argument as the efficient means of moralizing the world. That considerations of this kind will have great weight with a certain order of minds can hardly be gainsaid; but the philosophical evolutionist, better than anyone else, knows the futility of attempting to reform the masses by the power of logic. Neither does he lay claim to any device by means of which mankind can be coaxed, cajoled, or coerced into morality. What, then, is his theory of morals? He holds that ethics, like religion, like government, like civilization itself, is a growth and development; that just as civilized men of to-day, with such moral improvement as they have attained, were slowly evolved from the rough, rude barbarians of by-gone ages, so the moral evolution of the human race will continue. Other than this natural process of

development whereby, through the influence which the ever changing conditions of social life are continuously exerting upon the human nervous system, men, so to speak, grow into morality, somewhat as the sapling develops into a tree,—other than this natural process of the moralization of the nervous system, the philosophical evolutionist has no special theory of ethics, no particular scheme of moral reformation to advocate or defend. Convinced as he is that the present moral advancement of the human race has been achieved through the working of natural forces, still in operation, he insists that by this same process mankind will be brought to higher and higher planes of ethical development.

The limits of this article forbid a more detailed exposition of what I take to be the true evolutionary theory of ethics. The subject, however, is one of such overshadowing importance that I must add an illustration which I trust may make any further elucidation unnecessary. At that period in the world's history when wars were habitual, murder was quite a common occurrence; but as fast as indiscriminate warfare ceased, the altered social conditions consequent upon decreased aggression gradually gave birth to a sense of human fellowship, until, through the influence of such further changes as were involved in the progress of civilization, the average man of to-day has acquired an internal aversion to committing murder,—is so constituted nervously as to shrink from the very thought of it. Now what has already taken place with respect to murder will as certainly happen in other cases of wrong-doing. Surely there is nothing in the nature of things to confine this inward shrinking from evil deeds to any particular form of crime. To the question, then, How is the ethical regeneration of man to be accomplished? the philosophical evolu-

tionist replies, Though the moralization of the nervous system—the natural process of ethical reformation that has been operating all along and that will continue to operate in the future as it has in the past. What we call "conscience" is, so to speak, but the moral thermometer that marks the progress of this process—a process that must go on until the development of mankind is complete.

And now note that this theory places ethics on a much more secure basis than does the Christian doctrine of posthumous rewards and punishments. While recognizing, for instance, that the blessings of heaven and the dread of hell have exerted great influence over men as ethical agents, the philosophical evolutionist can see no cause for alarm should they ever cease entirely to exercise that authority. Elsewhere I have hinted at the notion that, in some form or other, the hopes and fears bound up with the great mystery of death may ever remain with the human race as a power for good; but even if this suggestion turns out to be utterly valueless, we need give ourselves no serious concern about results; for, as extra-mundane hopes and fears constitute but one of the many forces of ethical evolution, the lapse of a single agency cannot stop the whole moral machinery. Quite on the contrary, as fast as one force fails a new one is slowly evolved to take its place; meanwhile the process of moralization goes on with more or less activity, and surely it must be conceded that the emotions thus engendered, manifesting themselves as they do in spontaneous aversions to wrong-doing, furnish us with the safest moral sanctions possible.

"But," it will be said, "what does the philosophical evolutionist propose to do with men who persist in their evil ways in spite of his theory of ethics." He can do nothing but exert all possible influence to reform them;

and when he fails to produce any good results, he has no alternative but patiently to let matters take their own course; unless, indeed, the safety of his person or property is endangered, in which event he calls in the police, or appeals to the proper tribunal for protection. And, strange as it may appear, it is nevertheless a fact that this is precisely the course that the Christian himself must pursue; for in spite of the rewards and punishments which Christianity holds out as moral incentives, are there not hosts of wicked men among Christians? Are there not plenty whom you can neither entice nor frighten into goodness by the fair promises of heavenly bliss or by the eternal fires of hell? It is no answer to this argument to say that they are not true Christians. I am not attacking Christianity. The point that I make is, what is the Christian going to do with those who will not abandon their evil ways in the face of all imaginable threats and promises to coerce or entice them into morality; and I make the point to prove that, in taunting the philosophical evolutionist with having no means of awakening moral enthusiasm in the breast of a wicked profligate, the Christian forgets that he may very often be placed in the same predicament himself, in spite of holding an altogether different moral theory.

So much for ethics. We come next to consider the deductions of political science, and incidentally to supplement what has already been said on the wider subject of social science. From the philosophical evolutionist's point of view the true purpose of government is to prevent citizens from encroaching on each other's rights. Within these limits the state ought rigidly to enforce obedience; but interference with personal liberty for any other purpose does not come within the proper sphere of government. Such measures of reform, however, as are commendable in

themselves need not on that account be abandoned. The voluntary coöperation of those who favour them is generally a sufficient guarantee of their being carried into successful execution; and it is in this direction that we must look for their successful inauguration.

The object of state control, as we have seen, is to prevent citizens from encroaching on one another's rights. According to the evolution philosophy, however, the spirit of aggression and hostility must decline as civilization advances; hence when men attain to the high state of moral development pre-supposed by the ideal society, the need of such external restraints on freedom as it is the duty of government to impose will, in a great measure, if not entirely, cease. Internal restraints will supply the place of legislative coercion. We may say then that if there are any functions at all for a government to perform in an ideal society they must be such as consist with the most complete human development—such as insist upon the least possible state control and the greatest possible personal freedom. The practical import of which is that we ought always to keep this standard of government in view as the goal to be attained; and whatever compromises between individualism and state control we may be induced to advocate as a present need ought not to blind us to the fact we shall never attain the perfect form of government until the control needful to make good citizens comes *from within* and not *from without*. And thus, incidentally, we are brought to see the true purpose of social evolution. *It does but aim to lead men out of the condition of freedom and desire to injure their fellow-men back again into the original state of freedom with none of the original desire.*

But how is this goal to be attained? Not indeed by any magic means. Simply and solely through natural agencies,

through the instrumentality of justice and sympathy in their most highly developed and most completely diversified form—in a word, through the moral perfection of the human race.

The political creed of the philosophical evolutionist, then, is the doctrine of individualism. Not crude, anarchistic, or anti-social individualism, however; for society, as we have seen, cannot attain perfection until its units are bound together by the closest ties of sympathy. The individualism which the philosophical evolutionist advocates fully recognizes the brotherhood of man; and, in order that due prominence may be assigned to its coöperating character, it might be designated as *social individualism*, to indicate more clearly the distinctive features of the ideal state from the standpoint of political evolution. This term has, too, the advantage of indicating on its face that the philosophical evolutionist recognizes that modicum of truth contained in the perverted notions of the anarchists, on the one hand, and the exaggerations of the socialists, on the other. That men ought to be perfectly free, as Anarchy asserts, and that the freedom of each ought to be regulated for the benefit of all, as Socialism maintains, are propositions which the philosophical evolutionist admits when conjoined with the all-essential further truth that human beings never can be perfectly free, nor can the freedom of each ever be completely under the regulative control of all, until men are perfectly moral. When we will not do what we ought not to do, while yet having complete freedom to do it; when liberty, *externally uncontrolled*, is *internally controlled;* when we have only such desires, hopes, or ambitions as belong to the ideal man, then ought we to be, and shall we be, perfectly free; then ought we to feel, and shall we feel, constrained to work for the welfare of humanity.

And now at last our task is completed. "But," it will be said, "even if the teachings of the Evolution Philosophy be correct, they cannot be accepted as absolute truth. You have yourself forgotten one of your fundamental principles. Did you not restrict the field of philosophy to the knowable, and did you not caution the reader against supposing that finite beings can know anything within that field except as finite beings: whence it follows that your conclusions are after all of little value." It is undeniable that absolute truth is beyond the grasp of human beings; but for *all practical purposes* the teachings of the evolution philosophy, *relative truths though they be,* may be regarded as final and conclusive. Even though they be utterly false from the standpoint of absolute knowledge, they are all-sufficient for our guidance in the daily affairs of life, and are to be valued accordingly. Two analogies will help to make our meaning clear. The earth, in reality, is but a mere speck in the universe compared with other worlds, but to us it is a huge globe nevertheless. We carry on the concerns of life just as if it were relatively as large as it appears absolutely. What though it be but a tiny ball in space; if we undertake to travel around its circumference its relative diminutiveness does not decrease the length of the journey. Again, when we stand in the presence of a gigantic mountain it loses none of its sublime grandeur because, relative to the earth's entire surface, its height does not in reality exceed the ridges of an orange peel. Is the ascent any the less fatiguing on that account? Is the time assumed in mounting to the top any shorter? Assuredly not. We perceive, then, that this objection is of no weight, *except in so far as it very properly warns us against setting up human knowledge as a true measure of the universe.* Nor must we conclude that, because absolute knowledge is unattainable,

one man's theory of life embodies as much truth as another's. It was Goethe, we believe, who very wisely observed: "If I acquiesce at last in some fact of nature, it is no doubt only resignation; but it makes a great difference whether the resignation takes place at the limits of human faculty, or within the hypothetical boundaries of my own narrow individuality." This is one of the cardinal doctrines of the philosophical evolutionist. Fearlessly pushing his inquiries to the uttermost limits of knowledge, when once the impassable gulf is reached he quickly calls a halt, and, echoing the words of Dubois-Reymond, which Herbert Spencer had in substance uttered long before him, he openly proclaims: "*Ignoramus! Ignoramibus!*" We know not! We never shall know! On the brink of this impassable gulf the philosophical evolutionist must ever stand in mute bewilderment, pointing to Religion, as he pictures her to himself, as the only trustworthy guide under whose leadership mankind can continue its pilgrimage.

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